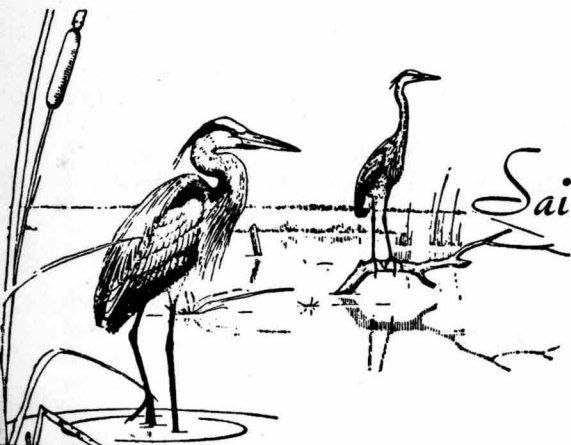




Saint Louis Audubon

Bulletin

June, 1962

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New Venture – Our Nature Workshop

BY LOUIS BRENNER

On two succeeding weekends in May (19, 20 and 26, 27) Nature Workshops were conducted under the leadership of Mr. Eugene Wilhelm at the Nature Center at the Arboretum, at Gray Summit, Mo. Though these first sessions were initially offered on an experimental basis, enthusiastic reception and enrollment proved this to be a successful venture. Those attending will readily agree that with such excellent leadership, the Arboretum grounds, with its wide range of habitats, is marvelously well suited toward development of such outdoor classroom programs. At the suggestion of Mr. Wilhelm enrollment in each class was kept small, 10-12 persons, in order to create a closer relationship between instructor and student. Gene, with his vast experience in natural history and his academic background in geography, proved a most interesting and capable instructor.

Using the Nature Center as a base for operation, the group assembled at 9 A.M., proceeding then to a high knoll in the Pinetum area of the Arboretum where a brief outline of the course was given and numerous observations of man's influence in altering the earth's crust were made. The meadow-like aspect of the Pinetum presented an excellent mowed-field habitat under man's strong influence and typical bird and plant habitants were observed. Succeeding classroom areas included lengthy stops at Brush Creek, where field edge and water course habitats were studied along with erosion and watershed control. Scolding yellow-breasted chats and noisy water thrushes made lecturing difficult there and a brilliant male orchard oriole became cause for long recess.

Lunch at the Trail House rested tiring legs and delightful bull-sessions of things outdoors ensued. Afternoon sessions took in the river bank habitat but briefly, for mosquitos were present in hordes, driving all to the serene cool and majesty of maturing woods where wood thrushes caroled in deep undergrowth and blue-gray gnat catchers in oaks high overhead made complaint to intrusion. As the hours passed, all too quickly, it was evident that it would be difficult to be afield with Gene long without acquiring an "awareness" of nature. Such was the term he selected when questioned how he developed his remarkable skill in noting and identifying bird calls. With his great experience in natural history many interesting

wildlife habits were closely knitted with the habitat and these tied into close relationship with man and his dominant alteration of the earth's surface through his many activities.

The great interest shown in this first series of work-shop sessions has proven their great value. Future work-shop sessions are planned for next fall, taking advantage of the wealth of subject material offered by the Arboretum grounds.

Rafting Down the Colorado . . . In Utah

BY BERTHA MASSIE

Our hundred and twenty mile float on the Colorado River started with a plane ride in a four passenger Cessna from Page, Arizona (The new community developed at the site of Glen Canyon Dam) to Hite, Utah. It was afternoon and with all the canyons, mesas, mountains and other irregularities in topography, the going was rather on the rough side. We flew over the "Crossing of the Fathers" (just below Kane Creek where we were to end our float), had a beautiful view of Stevens Arch, a relatively unknown but tremendous span (large enough for a plane to fly through), saw the various meanderings and moccasin bends of the Colorado, the holy mountain of the Navajos and finally came to White Canyon across the river from Hite.

Our rafts, which consisted of a series of pontoons fastened together, were tremendous. Some idea of size can be gained from the fact that there were only two rafts for 58 people including all their gear, the commissary equipment and food for six days. The pontoons had definite advantages over rubber or other types of boats. When we went through rapids and shipped water, bailing was eliminated as the water drained out in the spaces between the pontoons. Our leader, Lou Elliott used an "Arkansas Traveler" equipped with an outboard as the scout boat.

The first night was spent at Warm Springs—a lovely campsite on a series of shelves surrounded by the massive red phase of the Navajo sandstone tapestried with desert varnish. Outlines of arches to be were etched on the high cliffs and in the light of the almost full moon that night, the rounded fairyland was complete. Even then the Colorado did not appear silvery. Obviously river water was not used for drinking or even washing. Clear spring fed streams determined this and other campsites. Although the bank had appeared barren from the boat, the morning light pointed out the flowers. Among the very common ones we found several of the evening primrose family with fragrant morning primrose in great profusion, phacelias, gillias, mallows, geraniums, penstemons, and a variety of cacti including prickly pear, fishhook and hedgehog all in bloom at various spots. Again we were reminded that one sees so much more on foot than from a car or boat. At the water's edge we found tamarisk and redbud in bloom.

There were indian ruins and petroglyphs in accessible and inaccessible spots. I settled for the easily reached ones which didn't require hand and foot holds in a blazing sun. Lake Canyon, where we spent the second night, had a delightful waterfall just above our campsite. The pool at its foot provided a refreshingly cool bathing spot. A pre-breakfast walk to the Indian ruins was along a canyon that didn't seem like southern Utah—a clear stream, beautiful trees and a variety of birds including warblers, vireos, finches, towhees, swallows and canyon wrens. The trip always will be symbolized by the canyon—everywhere we were greeted by the melodic song.

Escalante River was to be our next stop but the river which had been

rising ever since the start of the trip still was not high enough to permit the rafts to get over the rocks. A lone pied billed grebe was completely nonchalant about our presence—he didn't even dive. Coming down the Colorado we saw numerous great blue herons, black crowned night herons, red tailed hawks, turkey vultures, willets, some of the smaller peeps and several flocks of unidentified ducks. Every time ducks appeared we were in rough water and the binoculars were in a plastic bag to keep them dry.

Our layover for the next night was Hole in the Rock, a spot at which the Mormon pioneers lowered their covered wagons and horses by rope. The majority of our group made a moonlight hike to the top of the rock, and thanks to a full moon we saw a silvery Colorado far below. On our return we were treated to strawberry shortcake with whipped cream. (Our chief cook was a college boy who loved dutch oven baking so we had hot biscuits, cornbread and gingerbread. The food was quite different from the usual camp fare partially because it was easier to carry food on a boat trip than on a pack trip.)

A landing on the west side of the river, an approach through an area full of fishhook cactus in bloom, scrub oak and other semi-arid vegetation led us to Hidden Passage, a narrow high walled box canyon with a profusion of columbine and maidenhair fern. To get to the far end it was necessary to swim through one stretch—the water was too deep for wading and the canyon walls too steep for walking. Since I wanted to be able to see after the swim, I went in with my glasses. Another woman proceeded to do her swimming with her old panama hat. (It was sunny) We were quite a sight, but with the magnificence around us, no one really cared.

Diagonally across the river was the spot John Wesley Powell suggests "was doubtless made for an academy of music by its storm-born architect; so we name it Music Temple." This quotation is from his book "The Exploration of the Colorado River" in which he gives an eloquent description of this chamber which his group discovered on August 1, 1869.

It sounded almost like the Mormon Tabernacle choir to the tag ends as we slowly approached the remainder of the group who were in the tremendous chamber singing. (Powell gives the dimensions as more than 200 feet high, 500 feet long, and 200 feet wide.) There were some lovely voices in the group and the acoustics of this spot amplified the sound with an indescribable beauty. On his 1871 expedition Powell and some of the others carved their names in the rock—a closer tie with the historical aspects of our trip.

A campsite at Twilight Canyon enabled us to sleep on a grass bed surrounded by redbud trees in bloom while we looked up at the sky through narrowing canyon walls. These were dripping with moisture which nurtured the hanging gardens of maidenhair ferns and columbine. Here our boatmen maneuvered expertly as we went up a narrow winding stream. By morning the river had risen another foot and this made for less difficulty on the way out. (The river rose six feet in the six days of the trip.)

As long as the motors on the rafts operated there were no problems of control. But the combined difficulties of a very strong wind, a temporary stopping of the motors, along with the current and back eddys resulted in one of the boats going on a sandbar and giving the passengers an extra "thrill". This occurred on the only day on which the two rafts did not travel together.

The greatest of the known natural bridges in the world—Rainbow—is hard to describe. Statistics (309 feet above the stream bed and 278 feet wide) mean little to the average person. Perhaps the fact that the Capitol in Washington would fit under this span and leave room to spare is more meaningful. It was an awe inspiring sight after our six mile walk.

There was just one unpleasant aspect to the entire trip but it was ever present. We all were extremely conscious of the fact that none of these delightful side canyons would be available for future viewing. Beginning in January 1963, the river water will be backed up behind Glen Canyon Dam to form Lake Powell. And up to now no definite plans have been made for the location of a side dam to prevent the water from practically reaching Rainbow Bridge. After seeing the tremendous amount of debris carried by the river—silt, trees, dead cattle etc.—one wonders how long it will be before the dam and lake are completely silted.

To many people, particularly the motor boat enthusiast, this is progress. To us it is change and the "drowning" of history. (We wondered what would happen to the wild donkeys along the banks)—Tapestry Wall, Moki Canyon, Hidden Passage, and the "Temple" echoing to "Mine eyes have seen the glory", America of "spacious skies". (These were the spontaneous vocal expressions of hallowed feelings.)

The final run was to Kane Creek just above the Crossing of the Fathers. Soon the pontoons were deflated and our reliable crafts were ignominiously folded into the trailer; good byes were waved and another glorious Sierra Club adventure had become a beautiful dream . . . Certainly we give our thanks to Lou Elliott, leader of this and river trips in other areas, and his excellent staff—Norgaards, Whitmores, Bryce and Mary Ellen with the beautiful voice, and "Woody" Chambers, boatman of the pontoon raft with the blue and red bandana flag under the cloudless Utah skies.

Birdwatchers Sight Rare Warbler

A Pine Warbler and about 15 other members of the Warbler family were among the 78 different species sighted on a St. Louis Audubon Society bird-walk in Forest Park Sunday, May 13. This was the last of the Spring Series of walks and this was the largest number of species sighted on any of the four Spring walks.

The Pine Warbler was the rarity of the day, as it is not seen often in the St. Louis area, being a resident of the Eastern Section of the United States, a spokesman for the society said.

Another exceptional find Sunday was a European Tree Sparrow, a species that was introduced earlier in the century to the East Coast, but is now found primarily in Illinois, and occasionally in Forest Park.

Five species of Thrush were sighted Sunday also, including the Olive Backed Gray Cheeked Thrush. Great waves of thrushes and Warblers are migrating through the St. Louis area now, a spokesman said.

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Additional Observations

J. EARL COMFORT

Our Society secretary, Deane Rogers, reported she and several other observers were thrilled on a nature walk at the Busch Area by an exceedingly rare Snow Bunting.

The two St. Louis Audubon sponsored Shaw's Garden and four Forest Park bird walks were well attended in spite of discouraging showers at times. The Shaw walks were led by Tony McColl, the Park walks supervised by chairman, Martin Schweig. No exceptional rarities turned up. Best warblers were a Cape May and a Pine.

When a gathering at the popular Jim and Lorli Nelson home on a high bluff overlooking the Mississippi River above Alton is planned the event draws keen anticipation of pleasure. The May 5th P. M. assembly of our Audubon board members and wives and/or friends was no exception. Trail walks were well attended and enjoyed under such competent leadership as Louis Brenner and Lorli Nelson and others. Tasty appetizers followed by a delicious supper were enjoyed on the front lawn which commands an excellent view of the river and its surroundings. This was followed by the usual pleasant chit chat that always accompanies these congenial meetings.

As is the custom of our Audubon annual first Sunday in May Spring bird round up of species many of the dyed-in the wool birders, more or less bright-eyed and bushytailed, were out well before dawn to remain well after dark when they rely on the ears to pull in such additional species as owls, Whip-poor-wills and Chuck-will's widows at the fagged out trails end some 16 hours later. Some 150 species fell to the census taker's tabulations. High among the individual listers were Dick Anderson, Mitzi Anderson, Kay Stewart, Walter George, Jr., Mike Flieg, Dave Easterla, Bill Rowe and their companions of the census. In contrast to other years no exceptionally rare species was recorded.

La Region De Los Lagos

BY EUGENE AND DIANE WILHELM

In southern Argentina and Chile deep blue lakes nestle among rugged mountains and green carpets of broad-leaf trees. These sweet water bodies lie between 40° and 50° south latitude in one of the most picturesque areas of the world.

Climatically the "Lake Region" witnesses mild temperatures but excessive humidity. More precipitation falls on the Chilean side of the Andes due to the cold Humboldt Current of the Pacific Ocean and the morphology of the mountains themselves. The change of climate centuries ago is responsible for the origin of the lakes. Excessive amounts of snow formed glaciers in the higher Andes which grew, sculptured, and retreated in almost continuous motion. These ice artisans gouged out valleys and basins and later filled them with cold, fresh water from the melting, retreating ice masses due to a climatic warming trend.

Diane and I were introduced to the "Lake Country" early in February, the peak of the southern hemisphere summer. We began field work in the "Yellowstone of Argentina," beautiful Parque Nacional Nahuel Huapi. Nahuel Huapi is an Indian term for "Tiger Island."

Commencing work on the southern side of the Park, we investigated a virgin tract of *Coigue*—a species of beech—in one of the low valleys. After

progressing through scrub-steppe we entered a pleasant forest of *Radal*, *Nire*, and *Cipres*. Our trail followed a clear mountain stream for a distance, then crossed a wooden foot bridge. This bridge marked the gateway into a different world. Ahead of us loomed giant *Coigue* trees, erect and still, while beneath them a shadowy realm of bamboo thrived. The deeper we penetrated into the forest, the larger the trees became, until we stood gaping up at a certain giant *Coigue* 650 years old and 120 feet tall.

Imagine studying such a ancient *Coigne* forest. This particular wood had escaped man's fire, ax, and rubbish. For six centuries these giants had drunk over 5,000 mm. of annual precipitation, and in so doing, permitted a complex community to thrive. Rich varieties of mosses, lichens, and fungi prospered on the lofty trunks and branches. Bamboo stands huddled together beneath, and as they aged, allowed mammals, birds, and even man to use their protective dense covering as shelter. Now and then, a stately giant would weaken with old age, rotten interior, or insect infestation. Winter storms sought out these victims by instinct and led the trees to their crashing death. But death of one tree meant life for countless others. Now space in the high canopy developed, permitting precious sunlight to touch the forest floor. Rejuvenation had begun. And with the gradual decaying of our sleeping giant, chemical biological agents worked feverishly for new life to become established. Decade followed decade; lichens followed fungi; mosses aided ferns and flowering plants. From fallen tree to soil to life anew.

Once penetrated the *Coigue* forest is more than willing to present its participants in this cyclic adventure. For example, in the dark humid under-story of bamboo a particular South American bird family lives out its existence: the *Rhinocryptidae*. Three members of this secretive family dwelled in Nahuel Huapi: the Tapacola, Chucao, and Churrin.

All *Rhinocryptidae* are ground inhabitants and insectivorous. The Tapacola is the largest species and the easiest to discover. This rufous-bellied bird, about the size of a Sora rail, stalks along the dark forest floor in search of ants. When alarmed, the bird perches atop a low bamboo prong, calls like a chicken, and pumps its dark broad tail. These birds are palatable, and the local Indians are quite fond of the dark meat. The Chucao, on the other hand, is much smaller, more colorful, and very shy. The Chucao blends in with the environment so well that often a bird escapes unnoticed. It prefers to walk or run rather than use its short wings in flight, and invariably watches intruders from the darkest center portion of bamboo thicket. Often I thought the bird's laugh-like call was meant only for me, for I failed to see the Chucao for several days.

But the Churrin, the size of a wren, became the deep mystery of the bamboo wilderness. Daily I heard this loud, repetitious song but never discovered its source. The bird was common as attested to by the number of songsters. Actually, several weeks lapsed before I noticed a tiny black bird with a white forehead. By process of elimination alone did I know this to be my mystery bird, the Churrin.

Excessive precipitation means luxuriant vegetation. Diane and I realized this fact as we ascended the Andean mountains. The western slopes, in Chile, contain some of the most exciting varieties of plants, especially ferns. Here, the giant Tree Fern attains heights of 10 feet or more. Mosses, liverworts, and air plants cling to the trunks and suspend from the many tree branches like grotesque spider webs. How strange to see all this and then observe colorful green parrots patrolling the flight avenue beneath high walls of glacial ice.

Traveling from Argentina to Chile is accomplished by boating across the Andes. In southern South America the Andes are not exceptionally



BY J. EARL COMFORT

The highlights of the St. Louis Area 1961 Fall birding were a Baird's Sparrow, an Eared Grebe and several Evening Grosbeaks among other interesting observations by various birding groups or lone listers.

At Swan Lake in Calhoun County, Ill., on Oct. 28th we had a rash of Le Conte's Sparrows in a field near the popular birding lake. This epidemic of this rather rare species had our group running in circles as the birds literally appeared from under our feet to alight atop a weed affording excellent identity and close up observations. It was our first Le Conte invasion in years.

Jim Comfort's perseverance and diligence at the August A. Busch Wildlife Area in St. Louis County gave us an extremely rare Baird's Sparrow on Oct. 29th.

A local invasion of Evening Grosbeaks began across the river in Grand Marais State Park, E. St. Louis on Nov. 4th when Sally Vasse located some 15 colorful Evening Grosbeak wanderers, which, when, and if it was seen here, usually appeared as a single representative. Later, while tracking down this elusive species, Dick and Mitzi Anderson found 5 Common Loons on one of the park lakes.

On the 10th this popular birding pack gave Louise Day and Bertha Massie an Eared Grebe, which was later located by several seekers of the rarity. Dick Anderson had the unusual number of 8 rare Bonapart's Gulls there on the date of the original discovery of the grebe.

At the Busch Wildlife Refuge on the 12th the Webster Groves Nature Study Society census group of 16 had an excellent look at a Harlan's Hawk. They found Harris' Sparrows plentiful in migration. Two long-eared Owls and 2 Greater Scaup Ducks added excitement for this group which was thrilled by the sight of some 20 Bluebirds, unusual in these days of Bluebird dearth.

On the 25th on our third trip to Swan Lake in less than a month we sighted a Franklin's Gull in breeding plumage. It was the only 1961 Franklin's in any plumage.

After a noted scarcity of Red-breasted Nuthatches there was finally a good representation in our area, particularly on our St. Louis Audubon last Saturday of the month trip to Shaw's Garden Arboretum where we found Cedar Waxwings in unprecedented numbers.

Our only Oldsquaw Duck of '61 appeared at Swan Lake on Nov. 6th.

Rare bird listings picked up locally as King Winter took over. Late in January Wally George reported a flock of 30 Bald Eagles on the Mississippi River near Peruque. We are heartened by his notation of only 4 adults in the concentration. Because immatures are more prone to wander this is more or less a normal representation. Most encouraging is the proof of successful nesting of our rapidly dwindling U. S. National emblem representative.

On a February solo bird roundup in Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis Earl Comfort found a Redpoll among Siskins and Goldfinches. Later in the week Dick Anderson saw 3 of these rarities there.

There was a continuation of wintering Grosbeak listings with a flock

totalling 30 appearing on one occasion at the feeders of the Fred F. Farrows and the Martin Maraceks, their next door neighbors in Kirkwood in February. The Evening Grosbeaks had been on hand in various numbers during January and February.

Dick and Mitzi Anderson located a Glaucous Gull at Portage Des Sioux on Feb. 11th.

Grand Marais was again productive, an Oldsquaw and 2 Horned Grebes yielding to Dick Anderson's eager search of the lakes on Mar. 6th, with a Greater Scaup Duck showing up there for him a week later. On Feb. 27th Kay Stewart and Dick had excitedly checked a White-winged Scoter there, a species that missed our 1961 composite area list.

On Washington's birthday a Short-eared Owl, flushed from a field near the St. Charles Airfield added interest to our day's outing. On the same day Jennie Comfort and Bob and Helen Hill started a pilgrimage to the Busch Refuge by finding a Bohemian Waxwing there among Cedar Waxwings, several persons adding this extreme rarity by locating the big Fellows among the cedar cousins. Usually from 5 to 10 Bohemians accommodated the seekers.

Busch again gave us an outstanding listing when the Webster Groves Nature Study Society census group located a Whistling Swan on one of the Area lakes on Mar. 11th.

Spring was ushered in with a birding bang when Dick Anderson spotted a red-throated Loon at Grand Marais on the 21st. This was the first record of this accidental species since 1942 when Wayne Short, Alberta Bolinger and others had one of these loons at the same location. In addition Dick came up with Redbreasted Mergansers and 2 Bonaparte's Gulls, which aren't to be sneezed at.

On the 24th Kay Stewart and I listed a Harlan's Hawk at Busch as well as a less rare, but uncommon Rough-legged Hawk.

But the highlight of the day's birding came at dusk at Kendrick Seminary in St. Louis County where David and Mike Jones treated us to a Woodcock Mating Flight and ground performance display as special guests to the ceremony he had witnessed the previous evening. With the fading of the last rays of daylight we were greeted by nasal calls nearby followed by a flash of swift-winged forms as one Woodcock determinedly chased a rival from his domain. Then, with a fluttering of wings, a dark object arose in a straight overhead flight with twitterings and rustling of wings that took our amorous swain nearly out of sight before its plummeting drop in zig zags to the point of its embarkation where the performer bobbed its head and puffed its feathers uttering weird "peents" as Dave kept his flashlight on the entertainer. It was a privilege we shall long remember.

To Earl and Connie Hath go the honors of checking the largest number of Redbreasted Nuthatches, 8 in one small tree at Shaw's Garden.

On Mar. 25th Dick and Mitzi Anderson had our only Pigeon Hawk of the year.

Few bird watchers can bird in downtown offices and find other species than House Sparrows, Starlings, Pigeons and an occasional Sparrow Hawk, but Dorothea Vogel recently saw 2 Peregrine Falcons as she changed the procedure from whistle while you work to bird while you work.

On the Webster Groves Nature Study Society Swan Lake trip of Mar. 31 the most thrilling adventure was watching colorful Wood Ducks perched on dead trees or flying from tree to tree.

high, and man centuries ago discovered easy passage ways by following the system of lakes and rivers across the mountains. From east to west Lago Nahuel Huapi, Laguna Frias, Lago Todos los Santos, Rio Petrohue, and Lago Llanquihue connect with one another, a distance of 100 miles.

Chile is a geographical destitute country. She craves every available inch of productive soil for agriculture to feed her population expansion. For several years Chile has undertaken an extensive and thorough campaign to eradicate the natural forests by use of fire. We were saddened to discover thousands of acres of forest land charred black, and we failed to see one standing *Alerce* tree between Santiago and Puerto Montt. Two centuries ago this "Sequoia of Chile" thrived in numbers.

Attention must be given to preserving the natural, historical, and pre-historical aspects of Latin America. The "Lake Region" of Chile and Argentina is in particular trouble. For example, Chile possesses no National Parks in reality, and only a few small forest preserves. Scientific studies are needed to plan effectively the future welfare of the country. By far the worst problem facing Chile is the proper utilization of land, and unfortunately, the forest reserve of the nation is being sacrificed to agricultural productivity.

The lakes of Chile and Argentina could be future assets in their natural form. The organization of an International Park would insure the necessary protection of the area in its precarious future. Proper forest utilization on a sustain-yield basis, more and better education in conservation, and a closer realization of the great economic, scientific, and aesthetic potentials are necessary soon to keep the "Lake Region" of southern South America in its near natural order. Perhaps it is not too late.

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Lyrebirds

BY MEREDITH CARSON

A continent as large and varied as Australia has a great deal more than kangaroos. This is widely known while more important aspects are forgotten. We hear much about the "oddness" of the koala, the platypus and the echidna, but the scientist is more apt to use the word "unique". For many of our animals would indeed be "odd" to an Australian while only a few would be "unique". This is not so with much of Australia's wildlife, particularly one of her rare birds.

About twenty-five miles from Melbourne one enters the rolling country of the Dandenong Mountains, about 2000 feet high which lie east of the city. The road begins to wind. Sometimes it is a high country road with lovely vistas and tucked along it are the small unpretentious driveways to the country places of Melbournites. One passes produce farms, and bulb, azalea and holly nurseries. In other places it is a dim corridor in a broken forest where tall, ruler-straight legions of eucalyptus stand thickly on either side.

Near the rather modest little resort village of Fern Tree Gully, a vacation spot and artists' center, there is a stand of trees of primal richness and grandeur which has been saved as Sherbrooke Forest Preserve. It is bordered with inns, hostels and picnic sites and broad paths run through its six square miles. Its heart, however, is unmolested and when the "trippers" and boy scouts have gone home it is silent except for the sounds of Australia's birds. Most important of all, it is the home of the Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novae-hollandiae*).

The trees, from which hang long strips of bark like heavy rain, are enormous eucalypts called "Mountain Ash" which in some areas of this, the state of Victoria, reach a height of over 300 feet. Like many of Australia's trees it bears an English name for the early settlers, perhaps homesick and confused by so much that was unique (95% of the forests were native Eucalyptus trees) named many trees after superficial resemblances to ones at home. Of the 320-400 species of Eucalyptus, 60 or so are called "boxes" and one of our greatest pleasures was the yellow box honey which we ate every morning for breakfast. It is, with "red box honey", the common honey of Australia.

In Sherbrooke Forest there are also pure stands of "antarctic beech", *Notofagus*. Unlike so many of Australia's plant families it does indeed belong to one of ours, but it is a different genus and not one of our beeches.

Sherbrooke Forest is what is known as a highland wet sclerophyll forest with a rainfall average of about 40 inches. It is sometimes referred to as a temperate rainforest because moisture and fog is held within it. It is typical of many of Australia's commercial hardwood areas. Below the giant trees are tall tree ferns (*Dicksonia*) with trunks of thick soft cocoa-colored scales. There are also smaller trees such as acacias and broad-leaved shrubs in any one of which, about five feet off the ground, the female lyrebird in her territory will build her nest of twigs. This is like a basket with the opening on the side in its dark pocket the large chick, covered with grey down and with long legs folded, will wait to be fed and the glint of its dark eyes can be seen as, wheezing in communication, it moves to the entrance upon the approach of its mother. In the dim green light the forest floor is bracken fern and clumpy grass and mossy decaying logs. There is a litter of brown eucalyptus leaves which makes fine scratching for the strong feet of the birds.

The lyrebirds, now government protected, are found only in such gully forests and even then the range is a mere 1000 miles along the southeastern coast.

They move through the underbrush in the stealthy manner of peacocks. They are brown and dark bronzy blue. If the bird is a male a closed and strange wiry-looking bunch of white tail feathers striped with brown juts way out behind. If it is a female this will be shorter and much more modest and dark. Sometime, deeper in the woods, while the male is standing on a large display compost mound of his own building, or standing in a dancing area which he had scratched out, his tail, opening out in all its complexity, will be a shivering canopy of white plumes thrown forward like a fan of silver gauze over the back. At its margins, curved like the arms of a lyre which have been pulled outwards, two magnificent striped feathers, curling at the ends, will arch downwards, and two thin feathers rising directly above them will stand upward like trembling antennae. From under this feather canopy which almost touches the ground in front will pour a torrent of song of such beauty and mimicry as to make this bird one of the wonders of the world.

It is interesting to see that even in the Encyclopedia Britannica and on the Australian one-shilling postage stamp the lyrebird is falsely represented. One of Australia's great naturalists, a man who devoted much of his life to the study of the lyrebird and other of Australia's unique birds, has pointed out that it does not hold its tail vertically upright in the shape of a perfect lyre. The late Ray Littlejohns spent many hours in the chill and dripping forest of mid-winter watching with keen observation and delight all the aspects of its amazing behavior. The dance is performed at early dawn when the forest fog is heavy and the temperature around 45 degrees. We were privileged to be shown by Mrs. Littlejohns and his daughter Nan the wonderful

movies he took of this dance since we ourselves were not able to see it, and to hear his recordings of the song. He was an example of one of those rare people—the gifted amateur—to whom science owes so much.

Now, in this winter evening in May we stand without moving in the path. We have seen four females. Scratch—scratch! How unconcernedly they move about, the long toes flexing and raking continuously, for the winter rains have brought worms to the surface of the forest floor. We throw crumbs from our picnic supper in their direction. We are amazed that they will come so close; here in recent years it seems they have developed a mild trust of tourists. Like large scampering chickens two come up to us and from about three feet away take them furtively. Large deep brown nocturnal eyes look keenly at us and the small head feathers lift. The birds veer as our hands throw. Soon they move back into the bush and their continuous scratching becomes fainter and fainter.

Dusk is closing in fast in this dense forest. We have brought a flashlight hoping, in vain as it turns out, to see some marsupial creature. We can hear the gratey crackle and screech of scarlet and blue rosella parrots, the delicate ear-plinking silver tinkle of the bell-bird, a kookaburra's hoarse chortle, and the hiss and sharp whip snap of the whip bird. Every one the lyrebird can imitate even the sound of wood being chopped. It can pour out its virtuosity for twenty minutes at a time. But this evening is not the magic moment. As darkness grows the lyrebirds nearby flap and clamber clumsily to the limbs of the lower trees to roost.

That magic moment is at dawn sometime in late winter—June or July. This is the time to hear and see, way back in the remoter parts of the forest, one of the most remarkable shows in nature.

Orchids To Our Contributors

During its two decades of publication (the early ones intermittent) St. Louis Audubon Society has never heretofore published an issue exceeding 8 pages.

In the case of our present issue, however, we felt that we had a series of articles of exceptional interest and amazing diversity. That's why we have 50% more pages than ever before.

You'll enjoy every one of these stories and we know you'll join us in saying: "Thank you" to their authors.

Editor

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